

Message Text

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63

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8988

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GEORGETOWN 1573

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GY

SUBJECT: GUYANA PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES COMPULSORY NATIONAL
SERVICE PROGRAM

1. AT OCTOBER 17 OPENING OF UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA FACULTY OF
EDUCATION BUILDING, PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM ANNOUNCED
NATIONAL SERVICE WOULD BE REQUIRED OF STUDENTS BEFORE ENTRANCE
INTO UNIVERSITY. BURNHAM COMMENTED THAT YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE
EXPOSED TO SOCIETY AND GIVE SERVICE TO SOCIETY BEFORE ENTERING
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING. HE STATED THAT, SUBJECT TO
APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT, FUTURE STUDENTS WOULD SPEND TWELVE TO
EIGHTEEN MONTHS WORKING IN GUYANA'S HINTERLAND SO THEY COULD
"ENJOY THE BEAUTIES OF GUYANA."

2. BURNHAM ALSO DISCUSSED ROLE OF UNIVERSITY IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRY. GUYANA WAS POOR COUNTRY AND IN HURRY, HE EXPLAINED,
AND UNIVERSITY COULD NOT BE PLACE FOR RESEARCH INTO OBSCURITIES.

3. FOLLOWING HIS ADDRESS BURNHAM CONFIRMED TO AMBASSADOR THAT
NATIONAL SERVICE LEGISLATION ALREADY BEING DRAFTED. MINISTER
OF STATE IN OFFICE OF PRIME MINISTER LATER INDICATED TO
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AMBASSADOR THAT IT WILL REQUIRE SERVICE NOT ONLY OF FUTURE

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BUT ALSO OF ALL PERSONS DESIRING TO ENTER CIVIL SERVICE. SOME MILITARY TRAINING WILL FORM PART OF PROGRAM. ULTIMATELY IT IS ENVISAGED THAT EVEN PRIVATE SECTOR WOULD FALL IN LINE WITH COMPULSORY PRE-EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, WITH OBJECTIVE OF BUILDING A "NATIONAL RESERVE" SIMILAR TO ISRAEL. SETTLEMENTS IN THE INTERIOR TO BE PATTERNED AFTER THE KIBBUTZIM. DISCUSSING PROGRAM, MINISTER ADMITTED THERE WOULD BE MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS BUT BELIEVES THEY CAN BE OVERCOME.

4. COMMENT: NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM SUGGESTED IN 1971 BUDGET SPEECH AND PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED BY BURNHAM IN APRIL , 1972 PARTY CONGRESS. IF ACTUALLY PUT INTO EFFECT NOW, IT WILL BE FIRST CONCRETE STEP TO IMPLEMENT PRIME MINISTER'S PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED INTENTIONS TO INVOLVE THE NATION'S YOUTH IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. BURNHAM MAY ALSO BE SEEKING TO ENSURE THAT UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA, NOW WITH FIVE HUNDRED FULL TIME STUDENTS, DOES NOT BECOME SOURCE OF RADICALISM OR ACADEMIC CRITICISM. IF SUCCESSFUL, NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM MAY EVOLVE EVENTUALLY INTO SOME TYPE OF UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING. HOWEVER, FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES ARE LIKELY TO BE GREATER THAN BURNHAM PUBLICLY ADMITS. THERE WILL ALSO BE POLITICAL PROBLEMS. OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND OTHER ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS ARE LIKELY TO SEE COMPULSORY NATIONAL SERVICE AS MEANS OF EXTENDING GOVERNMENT (PARTY) CONTROL AND PROVIDING INDOCTRINATION OF YOUTH. KING

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